

SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536

Policy Board

MEETING NOTES

Meeting Focus: Review Recommended Alternative

June 27, 2002, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Skagit Port, Hearing Room

Prepared By David T. Williams

Attendance

Policy Board

H. Dean Maxwell, City of Anacortes Mayor
Dean Maxwell, Skagit County Commissioner
Mac McDowell, Island County Commissioner
Todd Harrison, WSDOT

PMT

Sharon Feldman, CH2M Hill
Randy Simonsen, WSDOT
Marsha Tolon, WSDOT

Guests

Bill Carlisle, Transportation Safety
Commission
Nan Fullmer, Fidalgo Country Inn, Inc
Kelley Molstad, SCOG
Ian Munce, City of Anacortes
Dick Wilson, Port of Skagit

Materials presented to the Policy Board included:

1. Comments on the Preliminary Preferred Alternative
2. SR 20: Sharpe Corner to SR 536 Project Information Sheet
3. SR 20 Sharps' Corner Policy Board List, as of December 2001

Should any member that was not at the meeting wish to obtain any of these materials please contact Marsha Tolon, tolonm@wsdot.wa.gov.

1. Introductions and Meeting Objectives

- Objective 1 to share project information
- Objective 2 to gain consensus on the preferred alternative

While reviewing materials it was mentioned that comments from the refineries were not included in the Open House Comments. The comments were emailed to Todd Harrison Don Munks and Mayor Maxwell, but not the staff. Comments were read into the record and a hard copy will be given to staff.

2. Project Schedule and Status

Marsha reviewed the meeting handouts:

- Comments on the Preliminary Preferred Alternative
- SR 20: Sharpe Corner to SR 536 Project Information Sheet
- SR 20 Sharps' Corner Policy Board List, as of December 2001
- SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 alternative plan sheets

The project will enter into the environmental documentation stage, after receiving Policy Board consensus.

- **Review of Project Management Team, TAC, and Policy Board Functions** (Not discussed)

3. Review of Alternatives for Screening

Sharon Feldman reviewed the alternatives, criteria for evaluation, and results of the alternative analysis using a PowerPoint presentation, given at the June 25 Open House.

Four categories of alternatives were considered (See Project Information Sheet and Alternative plan sheets):

- 1) High-Speed corridor – Posted speed of 55+ miles per hour. Four options were considered.
- 2) High-Speed Blvd. – Posted speed of 45 miles per hour. Three options were considered.
- 3) Low-Speed Blvd. – Posted speed of 35 miles per hour. No options were considered

4 Review of Alternative Screening Process

- Screening criteria used included: safety, project cost, transportation analysis, land use and environmental impacts. Score matrix is available upon request.
- The Low-Speed blvd was eliminated since it offered no net benefit to improve SR 20 conditions.
- The High Speed corridor and High Speed Blvd scored about the same. No single alternative within these categories came out as a clear winner.

5. Review of Recommended Preferred Alternative

- The High-Speed Corridor, Option 2 (Sharpe Corner T-interchange and overcrossing west of Thompson Rd.) resulted in the most balanced and recommended alternative. It improves traffic flow, allows for business access, improves safety, and improves pedestrian use.
- Was there any difference in cost between the four High-Speed Corridor options? Yes.
 - The compressed diamond interchange is two to three time the cost of the overcrossing.
 - Lots of structures to solve a problem, yet if growth were to occur, it has the greatest flexibility.
- Safety aspect only within the confines of the interchange at Thompson Road. No analysis on local roads.
 - Low exposures and low risk benefit/cost of low speed vs. 2 close intersections, which increase potential conflict points for exiting an entering.
 - Right off is s safer, low conflict.
 - County grade system low speed road that is inherently a safer condition of low conflicts.
 - Drawback is the left turn on Thompson to go E. on SR 20.

Review of TAC and open house comments

TAC and Open House comments were reviewed briefly during the Introductions and Meeting Objective.

6. Statement of Recommendations and Support

Ian Munce – Keep in perspective, the interim solutions for safety improvements by implementing small projects. Smaller already planned projects should not be placed at risk, in light of this larger project. Factors in the second left-turn lane at Sharpe's Corner to Oak Harbor as an interim solution to the "T" interchange, and not lose the improvement while waiting for a long-term investment to be made.

Todd Harrison - The goal is to provide a 90 million dollar solution for the future. It will be done in pieces recognizing that things will need to be done in the meantime. The State's Highway System Plan could be the best means to deal with this issue long-term vs. short-term projects.

Dean Maxwell – The overpass doesn't look like a good solution, it appears to be an after thought, rather than the diamond lane.

Don Munks -- We need to consider how the truckers would use the improvement, and effects on the dealerships. Trucks will have a difficult time with the High Speed corridor Thompson Road Overcrossing alternative. The city of Anacortes and Skagit County will pay for the impacts overtime; it would reduce viability to businesses but #1 is the impact to truck traffic.

Both interchanges will impact the auto dealership. Consider moving the interchange west of the dealership to eliminate barrier to businesses. This was considered before. This failed using the fatal flaw criteria.

Mac McDowell- How much have we looked at the need to upgrade county roads? The diamond doesn't address truck traffic, but allows access to the auto dealers.

Sharon Feldman- This Thompson Road Option is conceptual and can be changed.

Dean Maxwell -- How closely have you looked at upgrading the supporting roads?

Sharon Feldman - Some work has been done, but more is needed.

Todd Harrison - A similar interchange is currently used on I-5.

Don Munks -- The diamond interchange give trucks a better opportunity to get on and off the road, but what I'm talking about is that we have a very short strip. If the concept of the diamond interchange at Thompson was put in, would the access right hand turn off of hwy 20 onto the Christiansen/March Pt Road, be there, or would it be closed.

Response – it would be there.

Then you have traffic coming down the old hwy down to a "v" where those two highways meet...

Randy Simonsen ...You were access March Pt., coming form the east, you would access it back here. You would go underneath the new bridge...I believe what you are saying is that there would be conflict between the west bound on ramp and the right turn at March Point. Is that right?

Response: yeah.

I think what they have done, is design it in such a manner that if you were going to turn right at March point, that you would have already gotten off. You would go under the bridge, come down and make a right hand turn. So there would be no conflict between westbound on ramp and the right hand turn onto March Point.

Don Munks So at the very left edge of this map, the large map, where it shows the diamond interchange, you don't show it connecting to the March Point Road. You show it connecting to the old highway.

Randy Simonsen Yeah...I think that's an error.

Don Munks So then how much space do you have...You're going to have a conflict between large semi's getting off of Highway 20 and semi's trying to move off March Point Road to some access to get back onto Highway 20 heading east.

So, that movement of traffic coming off of Hwy 20 moving west conflicts with traffic coming off of March Point wanting to head east. You'll have a conflict that your going to have to resolve with some kind of stop light (or something), but if you put a stop light in that small of a radius

you're going to have traffic backed up on hwy 20. So we're back to the problem we had before.

Todd Harrison You have a very good point.

Randy Simonsen I don't think this is drawn correctly.

Don Munks My point is, even if you're going to exit traffic off of the existing March Point Road, traffic is heading west that is going North on March Point Road... and if you're going to exit traffic heading eastbound on highway 20 you're still going to have a big conflict in getting traffic that is coming off highway 20 and traffic trying to make a turn onto an arterial road to try to hit Thompson, then trying to hit eastbound highway 20...you're going to have a conflict with trucks, then crossing each other.

Clarification by Todd.

If you going to move it way to the north and create a new road, then why don't we look at making that new road come across the existing field up to the point of highway 20 that we put an interchange in. You were saying we couldn't make that fit within the existing standard. But, that kind of corridor coming in, like we talked about before, gives you a lot more space between that and Sharpe's Corner if you do away with March Point altogether.

Todd Harrison It would still be too close to Sharpe's Corner to meet standards, but this is something we could look into. With the realignment of the road though the pasture...how would that impact the dealerships?

Don Munks It's still a better fit with coming on and off, but still put in the diamond interchange then you're going to impact, unless you put in a new access into the auto dealerships.

Todd Harrison I think we'll probably impact them.

Don Munks The interchange would be just below the dealerships.

Todd Harrison Would you close Thompson Road?

Don Munks Yes.

Todd Harrison You would have to. But what I was going to say is that this road out here is coming here, the railroad tracks.

Don Munks They (railroad tracks) make a sharp bend.

Don Munks The new road would parallel the railroad tracks. Yeah but it would be a lot lower than the railroad tracks. The railroad comes in like this, makes a turn and goes out like that. What we're talking about is down over here coming off March Point Road, and coming up in to here across, right into here for the interchange. This is where the auto dealership is sitting, right in here. Just below that, the land is available, and what I'm talking about is putting the interchange in here. Closing off this interchange, then in-traffic wanting to go to the auto dealership comes off, exits, and comes around to any one of the dealerships or businesses up here. But maybe traffic comes up across and hits the interchange to head west, or goes across the interchange to hit eastbound.

You're talking about I don't know how much...if in between Sharpe's Corner and Thompson road is exactly a mile, you're talking about just a little less than a mile.

Marsha Tolon The distance would be the issue, because the minimum standard is a mile.

Todd Harrison I'm trying to see how this is a whole lot different than this, other than the auto dealership impact.

Discussion

- Don Munks If you put the interchange in just down there that intersection then moves west with it. You still have the major intersection at Thompson. Now, what you've suggested that if you can't do that, then absolutely, you put the road come across the land and come up and put the intersection on Thompson. Issues becomes, how would you get traffic in and out of the dealership. You'd have to give them some other type of access.
- Todd Harrison The point of this discussion is that there are trade-offs.
- Dean Maxwell From my perspective, I don't see anything that really works for us very well. With the exception that we know we can resolve the issue at Shape's Corner. The overpass is a great idea... This alternative creates its own set of problems. The other options don't really work very well. I'm not really comfortable with supporting this recommendation. I don't want to create more problems. I don't know what the options are; I'll leave that to the engineers.
- Todd Harrison Based on what you've heard, is there anything we still have to look at?
- Dean Maxwell No, you guys have a difficult job. I'm not saying that we have to turn over every rock. But we still have issues to resolve.
- Don Munks I agree with Dean, I don't like any of the alternatives. For me we've been back to Washington D.C. and saw interchanges closer than 1 mile. A lot of roads were built in the past that was built for projected heavy traffic. To stick with a 1-mile interchange radius...to rule out every possible option based on the 1-mile radius isn't appropriate here. I've seen it work very well in other areas. I'm sure they're pushing a 100 times more traffic then they were designed for, and it works. People will adapt.
- I'm not comfortable with what's up here on the map...I'm not comfortable with the other alternatives as far as crossovers. If we can come to some other conclusion...
- Randy Simonsen Is there any other access points for the car dealerships for the diamond interchange?
- Response: They would have to come off the old highway.
- Dean Maxwell I think the issue is being stuck under an overpass.
- Randy Simonsen I would think that if there was a possibility that if the access issue for car dealerships could be resolved, and the bridge to the north of the railroad could be improved...then that would provide direct access to the refineries and the access to the auto dealerships could be resolved afterwards.
- Ian Munce If there isn't a design that works for the high-speed alternative, maybe we can default to the high-speed blvd. option. If you can't get this the intersection to work, then go with the best upgrades to the existing facility.
- Mac McDowell Doesn't support going to a low speed blvd. The Benefit/cost for the intersection doesn't work.
- Todd Harrison From an engineering point of view, I don't see the high-speed blvd. It's not a whole lot less speed, ...(tape ended)

7. Next Steps of the Project

- Todd Harrison Everyone is pretty clear on where we are. I don't think we're at the point of endorsing the recommendation. Everything east of the Bridge, there is not disagreement...I think we have endorsement. West of the bridge we have Sharpe's Corner, Thompson Road, and

Reservation Road have come up in the discussion. It really comes down to between Thompson Road and the Bridge.

For next steps more information needs to be brought back.

- Would like to hear more about alternatives to the east.
- Need more specific work on the diamond interchange at Thompson. (Todd and Don to talk)

Don Munks I would like a solution that meets the city of Anacortes and Skagit County needs. I recommend sending this task back to the TAC to investigate and develop additional solutions.

Todd Harrison The TAC doesn't need to meet. We would like to move on developing the environmental documentation before the election in November to position it for funding.

Marsha Tolon The TAC has done its job and was dismissed. The PMT can workout changes and come back to the Policy Board in August.

Todd Harrison Focus on compressed diamond configuration to see if it can work. Will re-examine a central interchange to the east of Thompson Road diamond interchange. Need to detail the extreme west intersection of the Thompson Road diamond interchange. Don, Dean, Mac and I will meet and discuss options and bring back an alternative to the Policy Board in August.

Ian Consider one central overpass between Reservation and Thompson Rd. This alternative fell out due to the elaborate process.

Todd Harrison Need more detail round the refineries and south to SR20 to understand access to businesses, and correct drawing at S. March Point Road as SR 20.

8. General Comments

It is important to move the project to the point where the environmental documentation and can be done so that the project can be considered during the November elections and compete for funding.